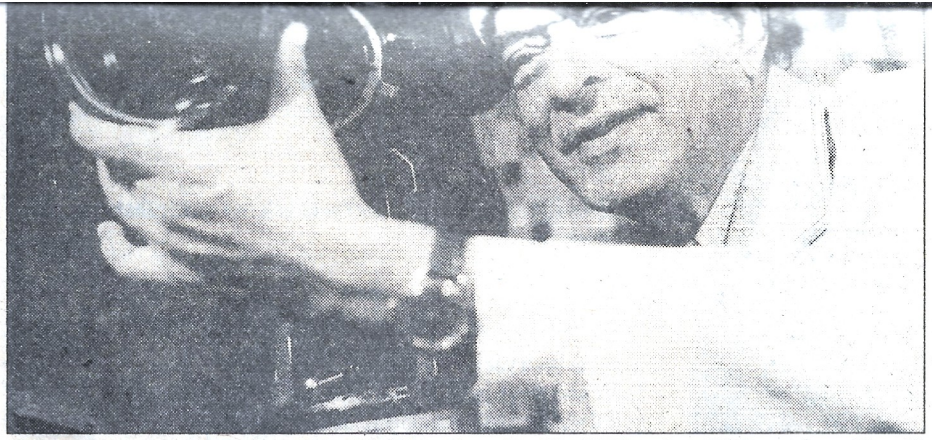

DR V SHANTARAM

Tribute

On the occasion of the actor-turned-filmmaker's birth centenary, SCREEN pays homage to his memory...

IN an illustrious career spanning well over seven decades, Shantaram Vankundre, known to one and all as V. Shantaram, was born on November 18, 1901, at Kolhapur. He entered the world of drama at the tender age of 12 by joining the Gandharva Natak Mandali, wherein, apart from handling odd jobs, he also appeared in bit roles in the plays staged by the company.

After a brief stint on the stage, he later joined the Maharashtra Film Company started at Kolhapur by Baburao Painter, whom Shantaram considered as his Guru. In his formative years, he performed all kinds of jobs that came his way in practically all the departments of film-making including cinematography and editing and also went on to become an actor. These multifarious activities helped him to learn the various crafts. He became assistant to Baburao Painter and played small roles in *Surekha Haran* in 1921, *Damaji* in 1922 and *Maya Bazar* in 1923. His first major role was in the silent movie *Sinhagad*.

Shantaram made his directorial debut with *Netaji Palkar* in 1927. Two years later, he founded the Prabhat Film Company, in association with S Fatehlal, V Damle, K Dhaiber and Sitaram Kulkarni. The new company came into being at Kolhapur, its first film being *Gopal Krishna* in 1929. Prabhat established its own studio at Pune and it was there that Shantaram made India's first multi-colour film, *Sairendhri*, printed and processed in Germany.

In 1932, Prabhat produced its first talkie, *Ayodhya Ka Raja* (*Ayodhyecha Raja* in Marathi), a mythological, which was directed by him. Followed other noteworthy films directed by him for Prabhat like *Duniya Na Mane* (*Kunku* in Marathi) which dwelt on the theme of child marriage, *Aadmi* (*Manoos* in Marathi) about a policeman and a prostitute, and *Padosi* (*Shejari* in Marathi) on Hindu-Muslim amity, which put Shantaram on the top rung Indian film directors. After the last-named film, Shantaram left Prabhat and shifted to Bombay where he set up Rajkamal Kalamandir by acquiring the old Wadia Movietone studio at Parel. Whilst the premises and studio were being renovated, he briefly served as Chief Producer FAB (Government of India's Film Advisory Board). Rajkamal's first film was *Shakuntala* which ran for over 100 weeks in Bombay.

His most acclaimed films under the Rajkamal banner include *Dr Kotnis Ki Amar Kahani* about an Indian medical practitioner's visit to China, *Dahej* with a theme about dowry, *Jhanak Jhanak Payal Baaje* which was a dance-musical and *Do Ankhen Barah Haath* on the reformation of criminals. Known for bold experimentation with techniques and themes, he has given Indian cinema several socially relevant and purposeful films.

Shantaram has many firsts to his credit during his Prabhat days. These include the first children's film, *Ranisaheba*, in 1930, first use of a camera trolley in 1931 for the silent film *Chandrasena*, first Marathi talkie *Ayodhyecha Raja* in 1933, first colour film *Sairendhri* in 1933, production of gramophone records from the original sound track in 1934, use of telephoto lens for *Amrit Manthan* in 1935, first animation film *Jambukaka* in 1936, and the first utilisation of back-projection for *Amar Jyoti* in 1937.

Shantaram's films garnered many national and international awards. He made a mark on the international film scene when *Amar Jyoti* received a Certificate of Merit at the Venice Film Festival in 1936. *Amar Bhoopali* was named for Best Sound Recording from the Centre National de La Cinematographic at the Cannes Film Festival in 1952. And *Do Aankhen Barah Haath*, came as a crowning glory, winning awards from the Hollywood Press Association, the Berlin Film Festival and the Catholic Cinema Bureau. It was also named the Best film of 1957 at the National Film Awards.

Shantaram was honoured with Padmabhushan. He was honoured with the Dadasaheb Phalke Award in 1986 for his outstanding contribution to the development and enrichment of Indian cinema. An Honorary Doctorate was also conferred on him by the University of Nagpur. He was connected with various film institutions, like the Film Advisory Board and the Central Board of Film Censors. He was the founder president of the Film Producers Guild of India, a member of the SK Patil Film Inquiry Committee and a founder member of the Children's Film Society.

V Shantaram wrote an autobiography *Shantarama* published in Marathi and Hindi which throws light on his childhood days, early struggles and his steady yet determined march to the position of eminence he achieved in the world of cinema.

Awards in his memory have been instituted by the Central government and the Government of Maharashtra and also by the V Shantaram Motion Picture Scientific Research and Cultural Foundation. ●

1924	Sati Padmini
1925	Savkari Pash, Shalasha, Rana Hamir
1926	Gaj Gauri, Bhakt Prahlad
1927	Netaji Palkar, Murliwala
1928	Maharathi Karna, Midnight Girl
1929	Baji Prabhu Deshpande, Gopal Krishna
1930	Uday Kal
1931	Khooni Khanjar, Rani Sahiba, Chandrasena

TALKIE

1932	*Ayodhya Ka Raja* (Hindi/Marahti), *Jalti Nishani*, *Maya Machhindra* (Hindi/Marathi), *Seeta Kalyanam* (Tamil)
1933	*Sairandhri* (Hindi/Marathi), *Sinhagad*
1934	*Amrit Manthan* (Hindi/Marathi)
1935	*Chandrasena*, *Dharmatma* (Hindi/Marathi/Tamil)
1936	*Amar Jyoti* (Hindi), *Rajput Ramani*
1937	*Duniya Na Mane* (Hindi/Marathi), *Wahan*
1938	*Gopal Krishna* (Hindi/Marathi), *Mera Ladka* (Hindi/Marathi), *Sant Gyaneshwar* (Hindi/Marathi)
1939	*Aadmi* (Hindi/Marathi)
1941	*Padosi* (Hindi/Marathi), *Sant Sakhu* (Hindi/Marathi)
1943	*Shakuntala*
1944	*Mali* (Hindi/Marathi), *Prabat Pe Apna Dera*
1946	*Dr Kotnis Ki Amar Kahani* (Hindi/English)
1947	*Matwala Shair Ramjoshi* (Hindi/Marathi), *Jeevan Yatra*
1948	*Andhon Ki Duniya*, *Banbasi*, *Bhool*
1949	*Apna Desh* (Hindi/Tamil)
1952	*Parchhaian*
1953	*Surang*, *Teen Batti Chaar Rasta*
1954	*Subah Ka Tara*
1955	*Janak Janak Payal Baje*
1956	*Toofan Aur Diya*
1957	*Do Ankhen Barah Haath*
1958	*Mausi*
1959	*Navrang*
1960	*Phool Aur Kaliyan*, *Kale Gore*
1961	*Stree*
1963	*Sehra*, *Palatak* (Bangla)
1964	*Geet Gaya Patharon Ne*
1966	*Ladki Sayadri Ki* (Hindi/Marathi)
1967	*Boond Jo Ban Gaye Moti*
1971	*Jal Bin Machhli Nritya Bin Bijli*
1973	*Pinjra* (Hindi/Marathi)
1975	*Chandanachi Choli Ang Ang Jhali* (Marathi)
1976	*Jhoonj* (Marathi)
1977	*Chhaani* (Hindi/Marathi), *Asla Navra Nakoga Bai* (Marathi)
1978	*Raja Rani Ko Chahiye Pasina* (Hindi)
1987	*Jhanjhaar* (Hindi)